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Railroad Commission rules "no conclusive evidence" Venus quake linked to oil and gas



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Scott Passmore, Reno director of public works, checks on a solar powered seismic monitor installed by Southern Methodist University that records earthquakes. (AP Photo/LM Otero, File)

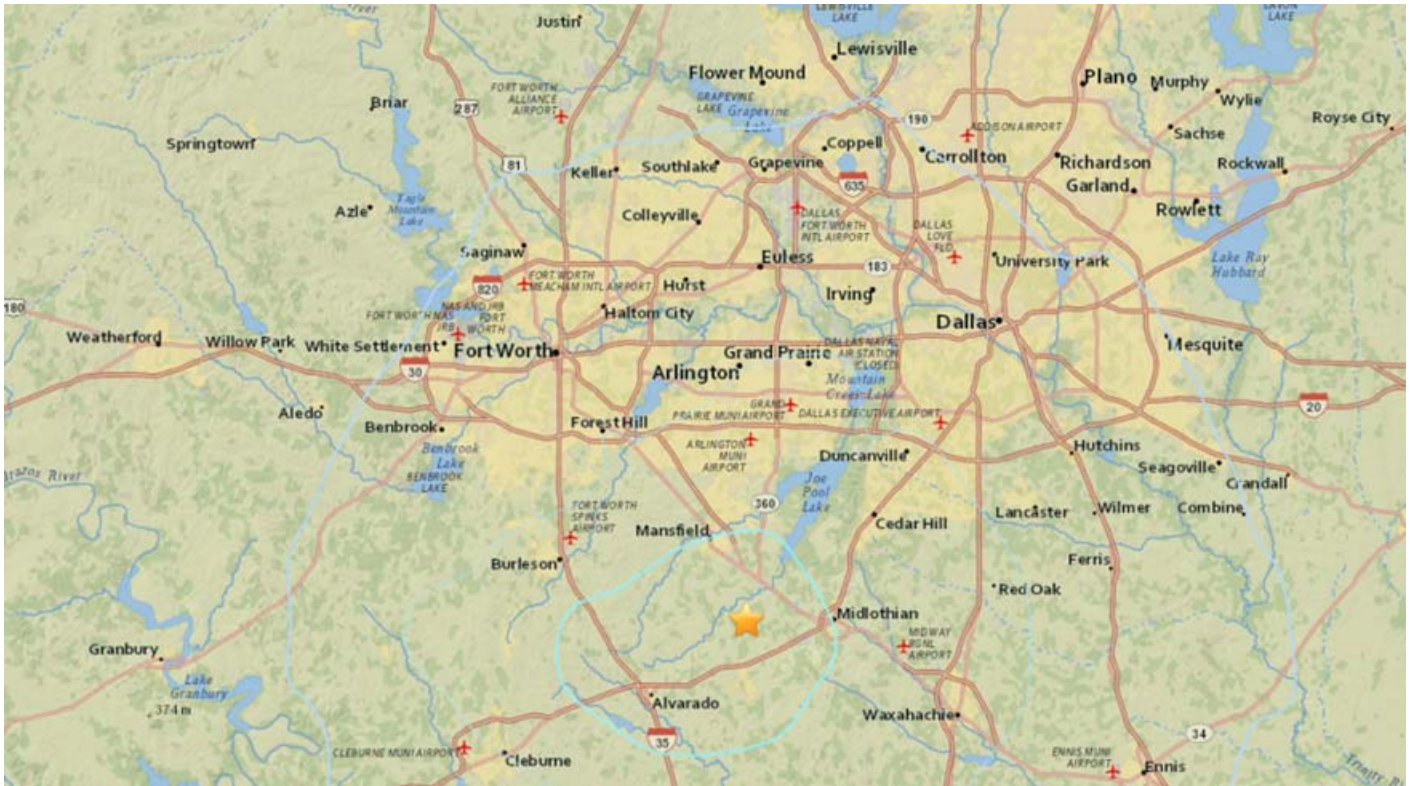
A 4.0 magnitude earthquake that shook Johnson County last month has been found by the Texas Railroad Commission not to have been caused by oil and natural gas activity in the area.

The commission reported Friday it had tested five wastewater injection wells within 100 miles of the epicenter of the May 7 earthquake in Venus. Injection wells are used to dispose of large quantities of wastewater that are a byproduct of oil and gas drilling thousands of feet underground and have been linked to seismic activity going back to the 1960s.

The railroad commission said with this quake, the largest in the Dallas-Fort Worth region ever recorded. in there was “no conclusive evidence” of a connection to disposal wells.

“While we can’t say at this time there is a connection, this is the beginning of the process, not the end in analyzing and understanding whether there is any correlation and what, if any action by the

Commission may be necessary in the future to protect public safety and our natural resources,” Railroad Commission seismologist Craig Pearson said in a statement.



U.S. Geological Survey

The commission is already examining shutting down two disposal wells northwest of Fort Worth after a study by SMU and the U.S. Geological Survey linked earthquakes there to nearby disposal wells owned by XTO Energy and Enervest Energy. Both companies have contested that finding.

In a hearing last week, Pearson agreed.

“I have not reached the conclusion that oil and gas activity is the causal factor,” Pearson said. “While we remain concerned about seismic activity in the state, we still haven’t had a hearing where we’ve had a definite case made that a specific operator is associated with any specific earthquake activity.”

The railroad commission has posted the data from the Johnson County tests on their website.